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### *Confronting Injustice and Oppression: Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers.* David G. Gil.

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that facilitate labor force participation both locally and at the regional level.

This is a useful book which provides a concise summary of a complex field. It demonstrates that community based workforce development activities can make a real difference. As more community groups organize not only to address local social needs but to enhance local economic development, the role of organizations that are specifically committed to workforce development deserve serious academic scrutiny. While the authors recognize that their case studies do not comprise a formal or systematic evaluation or workforce development programs, the book shows that community groups, planners, political leaders and even social workers have much to learn from these efforts. Since employment now dominates current welfare policy, the book is particularly relevant to social workers and others engaged in the human services.

David G. Gil, *Confronting Injustice and Oppression: Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. \$ 49.50 hardcover, \$ 22.50 papercover.

Although most social workers are committed to a therapeutic role which advocates the treatment of personal and social problems through direct practice, a minority argue that the profession ought to be committed to the eradication of injustice and oppression. Although this position is not actively endorsed by many rank and file practitioners, it had been adopted by mainstream professional organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers, the International Federation of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education. These and other organizations have all stressed the profession's role in combating injustice and oppression.

Although this has created a paradoxical situation in which an official commitment to progressive social change is not widely supported, David Gill believes that it is possible to inspire all social workers to accept the need to confront injustice and oppression in their daily practice. It is necessary, he suggests, to demonstrate that many of the problems they deal with can be attributed to wider societal inequalities. Illustrating this argument with reference to his previous studies of child abuse, Gil points out

that many of these cases are a direct consequence of poverty and deprivation. Instead of blaming abusive parents, social workers should help them to understand the wider societal etiology of the problem and use this explanation as an essential element in formulating an therapeutic response. They should also campaign for the remediation of the conditions that create abusive situations in the first place. This does not involve condoning abuse but offers a more incisive and effective means of addressing the problem.

While many will disagree with Gil's approach, his book is one of the most readable and practical statements on radical social work practice to date. Unlike many others of its genre, the book does not merely engage in critical analysis but offers tangible proposals for implementing a practice agenda that confronts social injustice and oppression. It is entirely consonant with the current emphasis on strengths based practice in social work. It does not chastise clinical social workers for neglecting social justice issues but instead shows how these can be incorporated not only community practice but in all forms of social work. Its humanistic focus is appealing and it should be widely read by both social work students and practitioners alike.